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EXPRESSION.

ONE of the marked changes in the school of today, as compared with that of a few years ago, is the time and importance given to expression. As the study of the individual child has taken the place of mass work, and freedom the place of restraint and unreasoning obedience; as personal observation, contact with life, and real knowledge of things have come to be recognized as more potent than text-books—so expression has taken the place of repression, and joy and genuineness the place of dull sadness, self-concealment, and self-consciousness. The workshop, the cooking-room, the garden, the laboratory, and the studio, through which the child relates himself in a real way to the world's work and to people, and realizes his own power and use, are comparatively new factors to be dealt with in a course of study. "I saw that the children were not happy in the school, and I knew that something was wrong with the school," said Colonel Parker; "that was the beginning of my work."

With this change have come serious evils. Many of the teachers who have observed and studied the children, and who have felt the thinness and poverty of the school life, the failure to satisfy the child's craving for self-expression and growth, have been hampered by a lack of knowledge of the principles governing the use of these modes of expression, as well as by a lack of skill in technique; for nowhere is the skill of the teacher, the power to do, of so much importance as in the elementary school. The result has been an overcrowded curriculum, drill in forms of expression, and ultimate absorption in these forms which, instead of being obedient servants transmitting thought and feeling, soon become masters, an end and law unto themselves. The practical working out of the principle that one can express only what is his own, only what he can assimilate of reality, truth, and beauty, we find most difficult in the school, because the product of expression is so valuable in our eyes

that technical skill tends to become the only measure of success. Expression in education means all that it does in life. It is work developed by community interests; it is a social function, and should serve the social organism. There must be a real demand felt by the child for what he produces. The desire to meet this demand creates an interest and moves him to study, to investigate materials, laws, forces, facts in science and in history, and apply all these to the improvement of his work. His own product becomes an incentive to closer observation, to fuller study and greater technical skill. Technique is not all external. It is the fitting of the tools and material to the spirit, which is internal. When the community life makes a genuine, adequate motive for expression, and supplies conditions and material for study and work, growth in technical skill is assured. Technique is a power, but it must be exalted by a fulness of life, a richness of personality—that for which it exists. With the child each expression—no matter how crude, if it is a free utterance of his own power—is a joy. It is his all at that moment. His only standard is what he thinks and feels. He is not trying to repeat a model, but simply to realize his own thought; and whatever he makes—his play, his painting, his drawing—should be treated reverently. Who knows what it means to him? Freedom to work out what he sees and thinks is his right. Let us not intrude and impose our grown-up ideas upon him, but study to know what he is reaching out after, and try to apprehend his moods, that we may feel his desire for growth—the unconscious demand that his spirit is making for his own everlasting good; and then co-operate with him in working it out.

Expression is a necessity of growth. The tendency of all thought is to manifest itself in some kind of form. Its vitality depends largely upon its embodiment in expression. Inhibition or arrest of this natural flowing out of a living force reacts to dissipate energy and to destroy that unity of mind and body which is the true condition of being. Free expression reacts to intensify, clarify, and vivify thought. Each expression is an incentive to another, because it brings a new recognition; a clearer, stronger image, which in turn manifests itself; and

so thought and expression constantly act and react upon each other; there is no end, but instead an ever-widening circle. Expression is, therefore, a mode of study. Work in wood and metal, gardening, dyeing, spinning, weaving, sewing, decorative needlework, printing, bookbinding, pottery, as well as modeling, painting, drawing, dramatics, and music, put meaning, vitality, and motive into the search for knowledge, as well as discrimination in its use.

Poetry, language, and the drama, painting, and music are traditional forms: they are tools, the embodiment of laws of the mind, a part of the accumulation of the race, the inheritance to which we are born and which we accept as we do all other social institutions. The world is full of light—beautiful forms, colors, and sounds. The child is susceptible to all this beauty. Brought into contact with pictures, statuary, the voices of men and women, and being imitative, he tends to express himself through these forms, modifying each by his own individual way of using it. The special appeal which beauty of color, light, and shade make to him, and the emotions they arouse, he expresses with paint and brush; ideas of form he molds into the clay; his larger emotions, feelings that he cannot put into words alone, he expresses through music. In the drama and dramatic action he brings together all his experiences and combines them into one supreme act. Charlotte Cushman once said:

I think I love and reverence all the arts equally, only putting my own just above the others because in it I recognize the union and culmination of them all. To me it seems as if, when God conceived the world, that was poetry; when he formed it, that was sculpture; when he colored it, that was painting; when he peopled it with living beings, that was divine, eternal drama.

Searching for the principles underlying any art and the laws governing it, leads up to a point where we see that all the arts are one, and that the only art is the expression of an artistic individual through a trained technique, be that technique what it may. To speak, therefore, of the drama is to speak in a broad way of painting, music, and sculpture; for the drama embraces them all, and, if we include the musical drama, is the most perfect outlet for human emotions. The passion of the

child for acting out in his own body phases of life that he observes, and adding his own interpretation to these, of stretching his own personality to include other life, is one of the deepest-seated in the human soul; yet perhaps no other mode of self-expression has been so little used in the schools. Outside of the kindergarten it is hardly recognized as having any function, if we except the spasmodic dramatics in the high schools and colleges which are almost wholly isolated from the regular work.

Dramatic expression plays an important part in human life. The theater, an offspring of a high civilization, is but one of the small spheres of dramatic art. "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." The background of this large playhouse is the social life into which each is born. Life is an incessant exercise of the dramatic faculty. Each of us is all his life engaged in reading other people, observing them, studying them, and consciously or unconsciously imitating what pleases, or avoiding what seems unworthy. Dramatic art is based on the fact that the inner life is revealed by words, tones of voice, movements, and actions. Each one of us is more or less skilled in reading the meaning of these signs; we judge of our fellows by those he puts forth, and by imitating them we put ourselves into his place and partake of his experiences. Through this door the actor enters into the character of another, whether that other be real or created by the imagination.

Many manifestations of this dramatic instinct have been observed among animals; they express themselves by sound and movement; they know the meaning of these in their associates, and express their sympathy by their responses. They respond to signs of fear, and are thrown into a panic when it is exhibited in their leader. They have their plays, sham battles, and races; they pretend to be what they are not; they decoy, beguile, and mock each other; Molly Cotton Tail, Redruff, Lobo, and Wully are great actors in the tragedies which bear their names.

The most primitive peoples have their dances, festivals, and celebrations of every joyful event—the seedtime, the harvest, the hunt, the victory in war. They imitate birds and

animals and pantomime the great passions—love, jealousy, and hatred; they act out sham battles; they entertain friends and strangers by prolonged dramatic festivals. Robert Louis Stevenson describes a five-days' festival given in his honor by the inhabitants of one of the South Sea Islands, in which they combined music, the dance, and dramatic action. The child begins very early to imitate the actions of those around him. He selects this or that out of his environment which interests and appeals to him, and, by imitation, finds out about it and about himself. That is his way of studying and experimenting with his materials, of getting at the heart of things, and of feeling and developing his own powers.

Whatever other function imitation may have in the development of the child, the beginnings of dramatic art are bound up in this tendency to imitate, which in greater or less degree is exhibited by all children. Anyone observing children knows how they imitate sounds and movements; repeat words, rhymes, and jingles; how they reproduce the life about them in their little dramatic plays, adding individual touches here and there, and even new conditions, and sometimes continuing in certain characters for days at a time. Everybody knows the animal games, the doll dramas, the housekeeping plays, the school and church plays, the personating of the father and mother, the teacher and pastor. Indeed, all the social life about the children is reproduced with startling accuracy by the little actors. They delight in the subtle influence of costume, of putting on the clothes of another, and so getting another self and filling out the personality.¹

As the children grow older they begin to group themselves together to represent scenes from history and story—delighting in heroic deeds and in the witchery and power of the fairies, demons, goblins, and spirits that people the old literature. To these beginnings we may easily trace the organized, developed drama of civilization, which is such a widespread, far-reaching influence in the social life of today. Almost every human prob-

¹ In the May, 1901, number of this magazine are a number of memories and observations of dramatic experiences by the professional class of that year.

lem, every phase of life, is reproduced on the modern stage. Never has the theater been so popular. The drama of the great passions of patriotism, of human liberty, ambition, and revenge, with their terrible conflicts, their pictures of failures, suffering, and death; the drama of the individual, of the family, and the affections of simple, everyday life, with its alternating hopes and fears, struggles, victories, and defeats, fills the theatres with spectators—because the drama answers a universal demand; because men are interested in human nature and its individual manifestations; because they love to be moved, to have the monotony of their lives broken up and their nobler selves startled into action.

Noting the universality of this dramatic instinct and the widespread love and delight of people old and young among all nations in dramatic performances, it would seem as though it could not be ignored in an educational scheme.

In the Elementary School we are trying to solve some of the problems which group themselves about this kind of work. The primary grades act out in a broad way, make objective, the stories and poems that appeal to them. They show great delight in the festivals and dances of the early peoples, in the home life, industries, weaving, cooking; and are always anxious to illustrate these in their own person. In these grades these illustrations are for the most part pantomimic. The children have not sufficient control of language, and at this stage stress cannot be laid upon it; but the situations are a great stimuli to speech when the action alone is inadequate to the expression of the thought. There seems to be nothing transient in their love of dramatics; the older children are never happier than when allowed to express themselves in dramatic form. They organize their plays better to make them tell their stories more completely. They learn the principles of dramatic construction by the actual fitting of their work to the necessities of time and space, character and situation. The expression becomes disciplined through technique. Language grows fuller, although always subservient to the action, which it clears up and moves on. In the primary and intermediate grades the children construct their own plays, suggest the action and stage business, write the speeches, plan,

and often make, the scenery and costumes. All the skill and knowledge at their command thus come into play. They exercise judgment and taste in choosing, rejecting, and determining values and proportions. The slow child is stimulated into action, while the impulsive child must restrain himself until he sees the whole, else his action has no meaning. In the upper grades the children study some of the great dramas and read aloud or act out scenes from them. They are chiefly interested in life, and the poetic drama gives them the freedom of the world, for the drama is life concentrated, intensified. It fastens on the real meaning of a bit of life or of literature; gets the kernel out of any experience of human life; it makes clear and inevitable the retribution of vice and the reward of virtue; it gives opportunity for the study of character in the light of completed action; it shows the struggle between good and evil, and the insistence and fatality of character, teaching morality and religion by implication.

Expression, either in voice alone or in both voice and action, is an incentive to the deepest study and appreciation of literature. The knowledge required is so definite and details are so important in dramatic presentation that the necessity of returning again and again to the text is forced upon the student. The individual is brought into living contact with a great variety of people and influences which supplements his own experiences, expands and multiplies his own personality, broadens his sympathies, deepens his emotional nature, trains his body into free spontaneous controlled action, and adds an everlasting charm, variety, and freshness to life.

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